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THE APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION:

ITS INNER GRACE.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

DEDICATION OF THE FOWLER MEMORIAL CHAPEL

OF THE

LEEDS CLERGY SCHOOL,

ON JULY 28TH, 1896.

BY

THE RIGHT REVEREND JOHN GOTT, D.D.

LORD BISHOP OF TRURO.

LEEDS:

RICHARD JACKSON, COMMERCIAL STREET.

S. MARK I. 38 :

"Let us go [into the next towns] that I may preach."

THEN the spirit which stirs within us whenever, however, we rise to a priestly act, is the Spirit of Jesus ; the will to preach, to teach in school, to visit the sick, to comfort the weary and sad, to awake some sleeping conscience, to prepare a soul for life, or to prepare a soul for death—the will to do this is the Voice of my Lord, saying within me, "Let *us* go." He and I doing the thing together ; He in me, and I in Him ; the Divine and human forces working together in the Christian priest—thinking, speaking, ministering—two in one.

"Let *us* go, that *I* may preach." He puts His words, His tones, His aim within us, till He can truly say that He preaches through us. Unless you rob Him of the credit, unless you seek something other than His glory, unless you trust in yourselves, He and you go together ; and He preaches, ministers, and celebrates. He is the Jonathan, and you are His armour-bearer.

This is the Apostolic Succession at work in spirit and in truth—out of Him, descending into you, through a long succession, the pastoral heart, the

soul on fire, the concentrated will, the presence of ministering angels, the vision of God, the daily sacrifice. This is the Apostolic Succession of which we hear so much this year. And some ask if it is worth all the reiterated argument ; is it a practical thing ? does any success or failure depend upon it ? “ This birthright, what profit shall it do to me ? ”

My sons—for some of you perhaps will let me call you by this name of love and hope—my sons, it is a birthright indeed, a link living and life-giving that joins us to Jesus Christ. Every Christian has a birthright. Christ the *King* has many children, and each is born in the purple, each has a royal inheritance. But Christ the *Prophet*, who speaks words for God—Christ the *Priest*, who offers the sacrifice—has His own lineage and family in the clergy of His Church. We are the heirs of His ordination ; we are His priestly sons. Every Christian is member and limb of His Body, we are His *ministering* members ; the whole body is priestly, we are its priestly organs. As a man is a seeing and speaking being, yet he sees only through the eyes, and speaks only through his mouth. So the Church is a pastoral, a baptizing, a celebrating nation, and we are the hands and lips by which it fulfils its vital functions.

Every confirmed Christian is a priest, responsible for others, with a cure of souls—in his family, in society—with his sacrifice to offer, his Lord to serve, and his witness to bear. But the clergy have *nothing else than this* to do ; this is our calling,

our living, our gift, and our judgment. He calls us as He calls no others: His "Ambassadors," His "Stewards," and His "Glory." By us He absolves, blesses, celebrates. This is Apostolic Succession.

I am not careful to prove a thing that no one here doubts. It is not the history of the Succession or its dogma that specially interests us; it is the *spirit* of the Apostolic Succession that I wish to realize, and use more and more; it is the grace, the power, and the blessing of it all that I aspire to employ among my people. It is the gain of it to England, and the virtue of it to our parish, that seems to me the most practical thing I can put before you.

This, then, is the Succession which makes us what we are, the priestly heart of our Lord beating in us, not for our own sake so much as for our parishioners; with His singleness of eye, all to the Father's glory, concentrating our look around; with His instinct for the new life of others instinct in ourselves; with His sense of His Father's presence, "Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me;" with His self-abandonment reproduced in us; with His late evenings and dawns of prayer renewed in you and me; with His love of the world and alienation from its worldliness moving us to-day; with His vision of heaven and sight of the unseen filling our eyes now.

But where should I stop? Three heirlooms at least I must take out of our Ordination treasure-house and realize.

1.—*His Spirit of Prayer*, which S. Luke inspires into us.

(α) The introit of all work, early in the morning, in the freshness and peace of the dawn, preventing the day; *before* His Sermon on the Mount, and *before* His call of our Fathers, the first links of the Apostolic Succession; a whole night in prayer, as S. Carlo Borromeo and a thousand others have done, each in their place of the chain, and as I know that one of you who are present has sometimes done; *before* His feeding of the five thousand; *before* He went to minister in the towns and villages of Galilee. The Alpha of every holy act.

(β) *In* His Baptism, *in* His Transfiguration, *in* the Agony, *on* the Cross. The soul of all, of every priestly act.

(γ) *After* the long pastoral day of Capernaum, *after* He had fed the multitude, *after* he had given the Last Supper. The Omega of every act.

And you have built this succession of His devotional life into the walls of your new Chapel. This is the outward and visible sign of your inward and spiritual grace. Twenty years ago some said that Leeds might teach better than other places the *practical* side of a parish priest's life, but they feared that the *spiritual* side would be starved in this crowd. This Oratory says that we have cared mainly for the inside of life, for this is the costliest and most conspicuous part of our buildings; and it has always seemed to me that the touch of a great

town, with its sorrows, its sins, its battles, and all its pathetic necessities, bends one's knees, and gives fire to one's altar of incense as nothing else has ever done to me.

2.—“*Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.*” Here was a sympathy of a new rank. The infirmities of a Nicodemus, or a Joseph of Arimathea, aye of a S. Peter or a S. Thomas, He took into His heart till they absorbed some of His own strength; and so out of weakness these men became strong. The ghost of a will in the man of the Pool of Bethesda, to which our Lord gave a life and a body as He touched it with His “*Wilt thou be made whole?*” till the man's exhausted and nerveless will stirred within him again as the will of a boy. The infirmity of faith in His Apostles, as they feebly looked on the paralytic child, which He kindled with His own Almighty faith, and slowly changed into that confidence in God which removes mountains. His daily consideration for the failures and self-disappointment of men, and His understanding of their difficulties, as He never quenched the smoking flax of the lamp He had lit, or broke the bruised reed out of which He would breathe sweet music. His bearing of hunger because so many were hungry; His bending under the misunderstanding of friends, and the opposition of religious people; bending, but never slacking His purpose. The home He made in His Body for thorns and scourges and spitting; the home He made in His

soul for scorn and shame; the home He made in His heart for slighted love and broken promises of constancy—"Though all men should forsake Thee, yet will not I."

So that one of our calling who never even saw Him upon earth could say, as part of his Apostolic Succession, "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" Aye, "Himself took our infirmities;" and so, only so, He gave strength to all who cast their burden on Him; so, only so, "His strength made perfect in weakness;" so, only so, He gathered the lambs in His arms, bare the sick and wounded sheep in His bosom, gently led those that were with young, and laid the lost upon His shoulders, homewards rejoicing.

And all this tenderness, this Divine sympathy, this appropriation of every kind of weakness and all sickness of body and soul, He handed on to all His Church; and He has treasured it for greater safety and use in the lives of His faithful clergy. "Who is offended, and I burn not?" said a clergyman of old.

3.—"*He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*" I have no need to remind you that there has been only one sacrifice for sin. This you knew before you first came to Leeds, this you understood more deeply in those rooms and at that altar across the road. This only offering and satisfaction it is our glory to celebrate, our salvation to receive, and our medicine to minister. But in union with the sacrifice of our Lord each Christian must sacrifice himself, and each

priest must lead the way. It is nothing that he who loves his life shall lose *it*, but we shall lose a hundred lives around us; it is not only that he who loseth his life for My sake shall find *it*, but we find the lost souls of our parish and win them home, not by the beauty of our preaching, nor the skill of our parochial technique, but by the secret of our Lord, the life laid down in self-denial, in overwork, in realizing the end of sin and the subtlety of temptation, as one of our Holy Orders said who never saw his Lord's example that he might follow it, but inherited His spirit, till the noblest life and the strongest pastorate seemed to him to "spend and be spent," "to pour out his life as an offering," "in labours more abundant, in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, and in daily care for his Church."

If we are the heirs of Christ the Priest, we must have something to offer. All our parish is an altar, and our life is our victim. All the things you hold dear, all that the world covets,—praise of men, and sense of success, pleasant ease and innocent tastes, and the allurements of friends, and the whisperings of promotion, one by one lay them on the altar, offer them in union with the offering of our Lord, and then, even in this world, you shall gain an hundredfold,—praise of God and the love of many, and the gratitude of those saintly souls whom you have led through the valley of death, the prayers of children and their parents; or, sometimes wanting these, your soul shall content itself with loving submission to the perfect

will of God. To bear the burdens of others, this is the service of God, to be a deacon indeed in that diaconate which grows more devoted and more burdensome in the priest, most lovingly devoted and burdensome in the true Bishop: for we read that our Lord was a deacon, as well as priest and bishop.

To lay one's life on the cross of one's parish, to say each morning "Offero Tibi, Domine, in unione Verborum, Cogitationum, Operum Christi, omnia mea verba, cogitationes et opera,"—this is the priestly life, this is the seal of Christ the Priest in us.

"Even as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve—*διακονῆσαι*—and to give His life a ransom for many," as we read in Saturday's Gospel on S. James' Day, the day when this Clergy School was originally opened with its six students twenty years ago.

It is, you remember, only *our* lips that tell to God, "Here we offer and present unto Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies." Our people say the "Amen," but *our tongue* alone utters the self-oblation. So it is in our parish life: it is in us openly and visibly to give ourselves to God, and our people add each their own living "Amen."

A fortnight ago a son of Leeds died in London. He was a curate in a poor district. With a body worn out by ceaseless toil, with a constitution sapped by pastoral zeal, he watched the deathbed of a boy in his district. The lad refused all food and medicine, except under the influence of his young curate. Two

nights this Leeds man sat up by that bedside, and at last the self-sacrifice was complete: the boy lives, and the priest dies. And when his father answered my letter of sympathy he said:—"There is nothing to regret in my son's death; he died as a man should, and the love of the men and boys of his parish to him has been wonderful." Yes, he that loseth his life shall find it indeed, both his own life and others. So lost and so found young Wilfrid Henderson.

This true kneeling by the side of our Lord, in thus bearing the burden of others in our own hearts, this pouring out of ourselves on the altar of Christ, and all else that makes a man a priest, is drawn from the single Priesthood of Jesus, the Bishop of our souls, by His conscious touch, by meditation on Him as the introit of every day, by walking in the blessed steps of His most holy life, by the renewing use of the Sacrament of His Body and Blood.

Our priesthood is Apostolic, not because we derive it from Apostles, not even from a S. Peter, a S. John, or a S. Paul, but *through* them *from* Christ the Priest, in whose loins we were born, in whom all were when He preached the Sermon on the Mount, supped with Levi and Zacchæus, raised Lazarus and Jairus' daughter, absolved the penitent thief, gave the Last Supper, and ascended Calvary.

Non comprehenditur Deus per investigationem, sed per imitationem. So said S. Bernard.

And yet the truth is deeper than this. Christ is not *received* by imitation, though this is the way to understand Him. He is only received through inheritance, and this shall be no barren pedigree, no living on the prestige of the ancestor, no boast of an heroic founder, but the prayerful effort to live up to so great a Father, to increase by use the property He has left us, and to make full proof of our lineage, not by sacerdotal claims, but by sacerdotal lives, by priestly duties fulfilled in all faith, and hope, and charity; by pastoral cares—the only care we allow ourselves—by loyalty to God and to every child of His. This is the virtue of the Apostolic Succession.

And never fear that the long line of clergy which separates, I should say unites, us to our Lord, has worn the cord thin, or weakened its truth or its force. The electric wire gives its message, its strength and its light, as truly at the distance of 1,000 miles as it does to its next door neighbour.

And that is only a senseless wire that neither understands the message it bears, nor rejoices in the strength that it gives. But the line that leads down from our Lord to you and me is a living chain, whose links are the hearts of men who lifted the weary into their soul, and loved not their lives to the death. Was it not said of the pedigree that led up to Christ, that they “through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in the fight, turned to flight the armies

of the aliens ; and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection, of whom the world was not worthy." And if such things were told of men who descended from the first Adam and the first Aaron,—men who were *types* indeed but not sons, *forecasts* and not heirs,—what shall not the Spirit say of the beautiful and sacrificial lives of S. Peter, S. John, and S. Paul : the first, the priest of emotion ; the second, the priest of love ; and the third, the priest of power—who handed on these gifts to a S. Luke, who reveals to us, as no other does, the prayers of Christ ; to a S. Stephen, who hands on the intercession for his enemies, and the committal of his soul ; or in due time to an Augustine, with his science of God and his tender confessions ; a Jerome, using his great learning to give to the people the Bible in their mother tongue ; an Ambrose, with his moral indignation at the doors of his Church ; a Gregory, with his love of boys, aye, of our Yorkshire boys ; or again, through the conscientious pastorate of an Aidan ; the beginnings of Church history in a Bede ; the refusal to save himself at the cost of the Church of an Alphege ; the missionary enthusiasm of a Boniface ; the admirable common sense and practical episcopate of Wulfstan of Worcester, who alone of Saxon bishops kept his see through the harrowing of the Norman Conquest ; the masterly education which a William of Wickham gave to England as founder of our public schools ; the wisdom of a Wolsey, who aimed to reform

the Church without a schism ; the loving heroism of a Bernard Gilpin, apostle of the north ; the home-missionary awakening of a John Wesley, to whose indirect influence we owe the purification of political and commercial life ; the saintliness of a Simeon ; the manifold life of a Samuel Wilberforce, who gave a new ideal to the Episcopate of to-day ; the daring truthfulness of an Arnold of Rugby, who gave a new ideal to our school life ; the martyrdom of a Patteson and a Hannington, who gave a new ideal to our missionary life ; the vicariate of Walter Hook, the first parish priest of his age, who gave a new ideal to our pastoral life.

And here let me give you a name yet nearer to us here, in this Chapel built in living memory of *George Fowler*, whose large view of life, whose generous sympathy with souls that are often out of touch with the saints of God, and the strength he gave to those who were agonizing in spiritual difficulties, made him a life-giving link in the Apostolic Succession.

Is there any sign of exhaustion in ten thousand times ten thousand links like these, the living rings of our Apostolic Succession ? "Hath God forgotten to be gracious ?" or "Is the Lord's arm shortened ?"

No, indeed, the grace of Holy Orders has increased by use ; each true man in the great lineage has added his personal gains of pastoral grace to the first bequest ; each holy priest has daily drunk at the fountain of Christ, and so become a living channel to those who followed Him, Did He not

promise us this growth of ministerial power when He said, "The works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do; because I go to the Father."

So now, it has come to you and me. We are responsible for inheriting the yearly deepening and ascension of life, all the bearing of others' burdens, and the self-sacrifice of clergy, in whose souls the spirit of Jesus has lived and grown from the first day until now. On you and me have descended in accumulated virtue the devotional and pastoral gifts which Christ has added in every generation to those who carry on His work. Can you think that Theology and criticism—or discernment, as I would call it—have grown till we have seen them grow before our eyes, while the consequent adoration of God and the teaching of men have remained stagnant? To know Him better is to love Him more; and surely we know Him better, even Natural Science has revealed Him, and Art has illustrated His nearness.

A regret arose in my heart as this morning I missed the old altar, consecrated by the vows of you and me, the altar Cross which I remember you giving, and the old Oratory in our first house, the old Chapel above the stable, in a rude simplicity that reminded one of the stable of Bethlehem, where our Lord came to us, and S. Jerome translated the Bible; but the second thought told me it was only a type of our own Succession. The old die, and the new take their place and are better.

Therefore, with the Apostolic Succession always behind us, as a long chain by which we draw the water of life daily from the well of Christ, and with the approach of the returning Christ before us, perhaps only a little before us, "Let *us* go, that *He* may preach."

As one of our British links of the Succession used to pray:—*

- "May the Power of God guide us,
- "And the Might of God uphold us;
- "May the Wisdom of God teach us,
- "And the Word of God give us speech.
- "Christ be with us, and within us;
- "Christ before and after us;
- "Christ on our right hand, and on our left;
- "Christ above and beneath us;
- "Christ in each heart that thinks of us;
- "Christ in each eye that sees us;
- "Christ in each ear that hears us."

* From the "Lorica" of S. Patrick.







